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Integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme: implementation of the views of host Governments

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 54/82 B, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to carry out a case-by-case review of and submit his proposals on the functioning of the integrated centres on a priority basis, in full consultation with host Governments, and to submit a report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-second session. In response to that request, the Secretary-General prepared a report entitled "Integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme: a case-by-case review" (A/AC.198/2000/3). That report was partly based on the results of a survey questionnaire sent to 14 Governments hosting integrated United Nations information centres, inviting them to comment and make suggestions on any aspect of the integration experience.

2. In its resolution 55/136 B, the General Assembly took note of the above-mentioned report and requested him to implement the views and opinions of the host Governments concerned, as expressed in their replies to the questionnaire provided by the Secretariat, and to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-third session on the steps taken in that regard. The present report was prepared in response to those requests.

II. Views expressed by host Governments

3. Seven of 14 Governments hosting integrated centres responded to the questionnaire. Of those, five Governments made specific recommendations on how to enhance the effectiveness of the centres located in their capitals. The views expressed and action taken for their implementation are outlined in paragraphs 4 to 7 below.

4. One host Government expressed the view that the information centre should not be integrated and that a Director should be appointed to that centre. A decision was made to appoint a Director to that information centre. The process of appointment is under way, in accordance with established procedures.

5. Another host Government expressed the view that the information centre in its country should establish reference units at major universities, disseminate economic information to chambers of commerce and provide more support to depository libraries. The Department of Public Information and the office of the United Nations resident coordinator jointly funded a

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project to supply computer equipment to several universities and public libraries in that country to enable them to access the United Nations web site and the library of the United Nations information centre. All information centres are encouraged to disseminate information materials on United Nations issues as widely as possible to Governments, institutions of civil society and the business community. They have also been requested to periodically visit depository libraries located in their country of operation and make recommendations to the Department on their maintenance and strengthening.

6. Two host countries requested that increased human and financial resources be allocated to the centres located in their capitals. In both host countries, the respective centres received increased resources. As regards staffing, one additional local-level post was provided in each location, that of a National Information Officer and of a Library Assistant, respectively. The recruitment process is under way.

7. One respondent requested that the office of the United Nations resident coordinator in that country work more closely with its Ministry of Foreign Affairs to better promote United Nations activities in the host country. In his capacity as Director of the information centre, the United Nations resident coordinator has welcomed the views of the host Government with regard to coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as to increasing efforts to promote the activities of the Organization. The Director, with the support of the Department, has strengthened cooperation with media organizations in the host country and established a United Nations web site.

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8. In general, the Department of Public Information has noted with appreciation the efforts of United Nations resident coordinators to strengthen United Nations public information activities at the country level. This includes an increased number of information projects jointly funded by information centres and offices of United Nations resident coordinators. Other field offices of the United Nations system also often participate in joint information projects and activities.